

St Ann's Taskforce

Notes of Meeting held on Thursday 13th December 2001 at 9am

Present: Archbishop Wilson, Matthew Abraham, Sr Loreto O'Connor, Fr David Cappel, Sr Clare Condon, Kathy McEvoy, Pauline Verity, Allan Dooley, Jane Swift.

1. Archbishop Wilson – Introduction

Archbishop Wilson as Chair of the Taskforce welcomed the members and began the meeting with a prayer. He explained that this Taskforce is being set up to manage this matter for the long haul. Archbishop Wilson expressed concern that politicians are involved.

He has met with the Consultants specifically re whether the Church should make the matter public. They felt we should.

2. Allan Dooley – Summary of how it began and where it is now

LJ [redacted] came to see Allan Dooley and Jane Swift with REDACTED in July. LJ [redacted] told her story about learning about the possibility of sexual abuse of LA [redacted] by Brian Perkins at St Ann's Special School.

Allan summarised the path by which Brian Perkins came to the attention of the police.

LH [redacted] and LB [redacted] were identified as the boys who were most likely to be victims of sexual abuse by Brian Perkins.

Loreto identified that there is no trace of Brian Perkins' file or time books at St Ann's.

Allan explained about the seizing of photos from Brian Perkins by the police.

3. History and Current Issues

Robert Hawkes who is an associate of Brian Perkins, was arrested and convicted; he was a known paedophile.

Loreto explained that REDA [redacted] a teacher at St Ann's, had told Claude Hamam, the Principal, that Robert Hawkes should not be allowed on the premises after he had been at school one day.

Allan said that there is a concern from parents about how the school handled this at the time.

Allan explained the delay in the police handling of this occasioned at the time by the illness of a key police officer, Lenny Mosheev.

Loreto clarified that this matter was never referred to the governing body of the Special Schools Inc.

Pauline confirmed that she does not have the statement from the Family 6 [redacted]

Allan stated that Parent Advocacy have met with parents.

Allan explained that he and Jane had met with Parent Advocates - Karen Rogers and Linda Clifford.

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He then spoke about a meeting with three families. Wally Conti and another policeman, Greg Ramm, and Pauline also attended.

He then explained that the Director of Public Prosecutions decided against proceeding with an extradition application for Brian Perkins. Brian is currently in Queensland. Allan has also written to Malcom Buckby asking for the extradition to be reconsidered.

Lea Stevens, Shadow Minister for Health has written to a number of people re this matter.

Archbishop Wilson commented that he thinks this is a dangerous letter and there was general concern expressed about the potential consequences of such a letter and her attitude. Important now to decide how to deal with Lea Stevens.

Allan explained the role of Parent Advocacy.

Matt believes that Lea Stevens will go public with this and that she will state that the initial handling of it by the school was a cover up.

Jane explained that she had been to view the photos at the Police Evidence Section, with Claude. There were photos of LH and LB

Of the current staff at St Ann's, eight were there at the time of the abuse by Brian Perkins. Staff have been encouraged to take up counselling via Access.

Archbishop Wilson asked what the constitution said about the responsibilities of the Board of Governors and the Principal.

Pauline said that REDACT remembers it being raised at a meeting. He said nothing official came through Centacare.

Loreto and David Prince both from the Board of Governors did not know about it. The current Board of Governors know individually but have not discussed it as a group.

Pauline to talk to REDACT to get precise information about what he knows.

Archbishop Wilson concerned about the welfare of St Ann's and Loreto.

Loreto said that staff return on January 24th and finish on December 11th.

Matt tabled a copy of articles from The Australian about the Governor General and sexual abuse.

David stressed that we can't have any informal involvement with politicians but there needs to be formal communications.

Allan expressed concern that we (CEO) have had no further information in the years since 1991.

Archbishop Wilson said that what happened under Claude as principal at the time raises questions about how well he is supervised now.

Allan said that a major concern is that Claude did not report to us when the Family family contacted him about three years ago. 6

Pauline said that we will have to discuss the who and what and how of the investigation into this matter.

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Archbishop Wilson said we will work out of the principles of Towards Healing. He would say to the media "I am appalled by what happened. Everyone is aware of their responsibilities now and we are doing all we can to support the victims and their families".

Matt asserted that things will come to public light via Lea Stevens.

4. Concerns

The process has already been longer than is desirable. LO statement came in September - LL statement came in November. He signed it because he wanted counselling for his

REDACTE

The parents have been talking to each other and feelings are strong. Parent Advocates can be quite frustrating and can be quite emotive. It is hard for them to understand and accept the process.

LL has told Wally that the parents have engaged a solicitor to investigate the Church, the school and the police. Anger is the overwhelming emotion coming out – what did you get wrong? Why wasn't more done?

Pauline doubted that it would be useful for Malcolm Robinson to be involved in counselling all the students who are believed to have been abused.

Matt believed we could write to the Minister for Education and say we are willing to work with him in setting up an enquiry and say we can offer support. Police have asked us not to speak generally about it. Parents don't want us to go public and police don't want anything to hamper their processes.

Archbishop Wilson said we would draft a letter to the Minister and send it by next Tuesday.

We need to re-engage with CCI and talk to them about engaging a solicitor.

Archbishop Wilson said that if this becomes a focus for media we will construct a strategy fairly quickly.

He then summarised as follows:

1. We will prepare a letter to Minister and say we will be very cooperative.
2. Christmas Eve the Church Offices are closed and will reopen on 2nd January.
3. We will meet fairly soon in the New Year.

Archbishop Wilson closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance and ongoing work.